

Washington, DC - Working to help protect the safety and security of our children, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (CA-39) today announced that she has secured a commitment to fund the Whittier Union High School District's School Resource Officer program. Sánchez got the project included in the Commerce, Justice, State Fiscal Year 2005 Appropriations bill, which passed the House Appropriations Committee today, and is expected to be passed by the U.S. House of Representatives shortly. The exact funding level for the program will be determined when the bill proceeds to a final negotiation session between the U.S. House and Senate.

"School Resource Officers are specially trained community police officers who work with students and faculty to develop crime prevention strategies, train students in conflict resolution, and provide early intervention to prevent drug and gang problems," said Congresswoman Sánchez.

Over the past three years, the School Resource Officer Program, which places a full-time uniformed law enforcement officer on each of the five comprehensive high school campuses of the WUHSD, has helped improve the safety and security for over 12,000 students. The program has widespread support from parents, teachers, and the community, but is in need of additional funding to continue.

"I am delighted to have received a commitment for funding this program which will help improve public safety and education in the Whittier area. Having police officers available as resources in public schools affords our children and our communities an opportunity to avoid trouble before it begins. School Resource Officers provide security, but they also do much more by helping students, teachers, and administrators identify risks and prevent dangerous situations," said Congresswoman Sánchez.

When Congresswoman Sánchez met with WUHSD Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson earlier this year, they discussed the success of the SRO program. Thorstenson asked Congresswoman Sánchez to help secure federal funds for its continuation.

"The School Resource Officer program is vital to our efforts to ensure the safety of our students. Although our business is educating young people, the safety and security of our students is our highest priority; nothing is more important. Parents and the community have been extremely supportive of the partnership demonstrated by the school district, the city, and the police department. The School Resource Officers have been highly effective in positively impacting attendance and creating safer campuses," said Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson.

Congresswoman Sánchez will continue working hard to see the maximum funding level possible for the SRO program is obtained.

"Keeping these police officers on the job will not only keep our kids safe, but also will contribute to a more secure learning environment, which is absolutely essential if we want our students to realize their academic potential," concluded Sánchez.

The SRO program is a partnership between the Whittier Unified High School District, Whittier

Police Department, City of Whittier, the City of Santa Fe Springs, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.